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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/06/2017  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [GR](#) [MK](#)  
SUBJECT: GREECE/MACEDONIA: GREEKS WELCOME ACCELERATED  
NIMETZ NEGOTIATIONS BUT SKEPTICAL OF SKOPJE

REF: A. SKOPJE 946

[1](#)B. ATHENS 2305

[1](#)C. ATHENS 2288

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Tom Countryman for 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (C) The Greek MFA has welcomed UN Mediator Nimetz' acceleration of talks. However, the Greeks are skeptical of Nimetz' most recent proposal and deeply suspicious of Skopje's intentions. The Greeks have agreed to Nimetz' suggestion that the next round be in Skopje, followed by a round in Athens. Meanwhile, Nimetz has told us that the U.S. can best help by letting Skopje know it is "time to work with Nimetz and get something done," and by telling Greece to avoid a "confrontation with NATO." End Summary.

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Greek Reaction to Nimetz Visit  
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[1](#)2. (C) DC Deputy Director Nimetz' 12/4-5 visit to level, but hosted by FM Milososki. Likewise, they welcome hosting a follow-on round of talks in Athens. Most significantly, FM Bakoyannis told Nimetz that Greece will "do all it can" to keep this process going.

[1](#)3. (C) The Greeks are skeptical of Nimetz' most recent proposal, specifically the suggestion that negotiations be limited to developing a name that would be used in multilateral organizations and treaties. The Greeks seek a "universal solution" that would require a change in Macedonia's constitutional name. Anything less, they argued, would be "confusing."

[1](#)4. (C) Agathocles and Tsoungas also emphasized their suspicions of Skopje's ultimate intentions in these talks. FM Bakoyannis told Nimetz that Greece had shown its willingness to negotiate when it publicly affirmed its willingness to accept a "composite name" that included the term "Macedonia." They noted that this is a sea change in Greece's earlier position. Tsoungas was blunt: "Greece has gone half way, and is negotiating. Skopje is holding to the same position for 15 years." The Greeks asked Nimetz to press Skopje to "negotiate and not hold to unhelpful and unacceptable positions."

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Nimetz: Real Opportunity But U.S. Push Needed

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15. (C) In a 12/5 meeting with Ambassador Seckhard, Nimetz pointed to a "new opportunity" to resolve this issue. Both Athens and Skopje have governments that are "capable of action." Furthermore Skopje places a high priority on NATO membership, and Greece has high incentives to put this issue behind it. Nimetz later admitted that the odds are "no better than 50 - 50" that this issue can be resolved prior to the Bucharest Summit, but he made clear he will give the issue greater urgency.

16. (C) Nimetz also asked for U.S. support. He noted that he has been in regular contact with EUR A/S Fried and U/S Burns. The U.S. has a "powerful and critical role" to play. He asked for a strong message from the U.S. to both sides that it is "high time to get this done." He recommended a message to Skopje of "work with Nimetz and get something done." Athens should be told "you need to avoid confrontation with NATO." Ambassador Speckhard assured Nimetz that these messages are being delivered.  
SPECKHARD